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NOTES ON  
THE FOREIGN POLICY OF  
THE UNITED STATES

SUGGESTED BY  
THE WAR WITH SPAIN

BY  
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## NOTES ON THE FOREIGN POLICY OF THE UNITED STATES.

### I

Before the declaration of war against Spain closed debate in this country as to the existence of a just cause it was asserted that International Law did not admit a right of intervention, under the circumstances, and it will be conceded that there is no rule of law to which an intervener may in any case appeal in justification. Nor is such a rule desirable, for the temptation to profit by the domestic troubles of a neighbor should not be encouraged by adopting a rule so likely to be abused. But while the law of nations consecrates the normal right of each State to independence with all that independence implies, it is conceivable that a State may so misconduct its internal affairs as to provoke an intolerable situation, and lay itself open to intervention.

Upon consideration it may be said that intervention is not unrighteous merely because it lacks formal recognition. Nor would it be righteous because of such recognition. The propriety of the act is to be determined in each case by the facts. If, then, a State shall intervene in the internal affairs of another, it does not necessarily commit a wrong, but, because independence is the essence of nationality, it is heavily burdened with the proof that it vindicates a right.

European interventions would be without present interest were it not that because they have been undertaken usually by several Powers, and sometimes on account of a violation of guarantees, it has been suggested that a joint intervention possesses an authority incommunicable to the action of a single Power, and that

intervention because of a broken pledge has a peculiar merit. There is no Concert of Powers in America—there would be none in Europe did a single Power occupy there the place held by the United States in this hemisphere.

Nor has Spain contracted with the United States in respect of the governing of Cuba. If, then, joint action or a broken pledge is a condition precedent to a just intervention, the course of the United States is unjustifiable. It is not perceived, however, how the propriety of an intervention can be affirmed or denied according as it is undertaken by several Powers or by one, for the situation in the objective country is the crucial point. If that situation does not call for intervention, a combination of all civilized States could not justify the act. If it does call for intervention, any State with power may respond. Equally ill conceived is the suggestion that intervention because of a violated guarantee is especially meritorious. The exaction of the guarantee is itself an intervention, for when a State agrees with a foreign Power to pursue a prescribed course in respect of its own subjects or its internal affairs, it qualifies its independence and must anticipate coercion if it breaks the agreement.

Obviously the critical question in respect of intervention is whether the conditions in the objective country invite it.

Civil disorder may rouse in a neighbor country so reasonable a fear for its own peace and safety that it may well intervene in self-defense. The United States do not plead this justification for their intervention in Cuba.

The material interests of a people may be damaged by disorder in another country; but intervention is not justifiable on this score alone. The United States maintained this position during the Civil War, and it was respected by European Powers, some of whom, and especially Great Britain, suffered severely by the blockade of Southern ports. Our government alleges very properly the ruin of our Cuban trade, and the destruction of American property as reasons for our concern in the pacification of Cuba; but these are not the actuating motives of intervention.

There remains the broadest of all justifications—humanity. And upon this the American people rest their action, with a due apprehension, it is to be hoped, of the errors, the crimes even, into which a nation may be seduced by an exaggerated humanitarianism.



The United States have committed themselves by inaction to this limitation upon the impulse to set a neighbor's house in order — that, as a rule, it is better for a free people to work out their own salvation, however painfully, than to be subjected to foreign rule.

But a country hopelessly distracted because of a vicious political system imposed from without may present a case for intervention. And this is the situation in Cuba. The attitude of Spain toward Cuba is unique in its contempt of the principles which are now presumed to govern a metropolitan State in dealing with colonists of her own race or planting. Yet colonists are but subjects after all, and shall not a State rule her subjects in her own way? But Cuba is not ruled. Spain has failed, and it is her failure which invites the United States. Had Spain ruled Cuba we would have continued to respect her power, but we owe no duty in the premises to a government which does not govern. And if Spain reply that she could have subdued Cuba by the methods of Weyler, we retort that we do not recognize the right of a government to secure peace through depopulation.

Apparently the situation in Cuba warrants intervention, but Spain presses two charges against us which must weaken our position if they are well founded. When a State has fomented or connived at the disorder which provokes its intervention, its action is scandalous, and Spain seeks to affix this stigma upon the United States. Now the very existence of our republic encourages oppressed colonists to assert themselves, and we rejoice that our example has led colonies to independence and moved metropolitan States to reform colonial policies. Nor do we disavow a natural sympathy with the rebellion in Cuba. But our Government has duly exerted its powers to prevent illegal intercourse with the insurgents, and although Spain denies this, it cannot be doubted that had sympathy overcome our sense of obligation, Cuba would have been free years ago.

The sense of obligation ruled our conduct until our Government decided that Spain was powerless to maintain her authority in Cuba by methods permissible to a civilized state. Here Spain takes issue with us. She charges that the decision was so unreasonable as to convict the United States of deliberately perverting facts in order to excuse a settled determination to dispossess her. In this relation certain neutral Powers, indeed some of our own citizens, appear to be impressed by the assertion of the

Spanish Government that it has made concession upon concession, and that we have not allowed time for their effects to develop, but have pressed demands of increasing weight culminating in the intolerable summons to evacuate Cuba forthwith. The Spanish Government has made concessions. It recalled General Weyler and revoked the order of reconcentration; permitted the United States to succor reconcentrados and appropriated money for the same purpose; decreed a new régime of limited acceptance and uncertain authority and declared that Cuba was autonomous; and in fine promised that Cuba should become another Canada. If palliatives, decrees, and prophecies, all tendered under duress, had presaged the peace of Cuba, the United States would have been culpable in disregarding them, but in truth these must be viewed as devices to gain time, or at best as well meant but impotent efforts.

## II

The success of intervention can be demonstrated only by the event, yet the United States have acted with assurance of power to terminate Spanish misrule in Cuba. In abating this nuisance they will have done all that is required by a strict construction of their responsibility, but because the condition of Cuba almost forbids the hope that order waits upon its evacuation by the Spanish forces, they have proclaimed an active interest in securing it.

When Cuba shall be freed from Spanish rule, we may expect its people to mistrust the new Power which has driven out the old. This mistrust cannot be allayed by a joint resolution. Our conduct must convince the Cubans that we intend neither to annex nor despoil, but to aid in establishing an independent neighbor.

The peace of Cuba will be our first concern, but we must not set up an unattainable standard of order for the Cubans, and then annex their island on the plea that they cannot govern it. Cuba may wait long for the order which we prescribe for ourselves, and indeed the peace of a Spanish-American state of the best type is not the peace of the United States.

The early installation of a Cuban government is desirable not only for the sake of the Cubans but because pending this event the United States must undertake the provisional control of the island. The undertaking will be sufficiently vexatious, even assuming, as I do, that it will be confided to trained soldiers and not to untrained politicians. Yet it will be better to prolong our control than to recognize prematurely a Cuban government. When the authority of Spain shall disappear, the authority of the United States must replace it and prevail until a responsible local government shall be ready to assume control. The government of Cuba, which shall be definitely recognized by the United States, and may thereafter claim recognition from other nations, must be organized or ratified by the people of Cuba freely deliberating and acting under the protection of our impartial authority. Although the United States will not assume to present Cuba with a plan of government, they should condition recognition upon the adoption of a plan which shall establish a new nation upon principles of justice.

A further condition of recognition may be the ratification of a treaty containing such engagements and guarantees as may be necessary to secure the interests of the United States.

Territorial aggrandizement is so often the real purpose of intervention that the United States are, not surprisingly, charged with intending to appropriate Cuba, notwithstanding their formal disclaimer. Nor has this disclaimer put away temptation. The European Powers would either approve the act or view it cynically as a result quite in harmony with their own theory of intervention, and even Spain might prefer to have Cuba ruled by the United States than by victorious rebels. Annexation has never lacked prophets and advocates, and opportunity will stimulate desire. An annexation party may appear in Cuba itself. More importantly the condition of Cuba may suggest that the humane impulse which prompted us to free the island should carry us on to secure its peace by governing it. Against the arguments for annexation must be opposed not merely the disclaimer contained in the joint resolution of Congress and repeated in the ultimatum evaded by the Spanish Government, but the solid reasons which prompted it. These reasons are that the interests of the United States will be better served by the independence of Cuba than by annexation; and that the Cubans ought not to pass from one master to another, however well dis-

posed the latter might be, but should have a fair opportunity to acquire the art of self-government, guided in their first steps by the firm hand of the United States. If the opportunity shall not be embraced, the United States may be compelled eventually to modify their position.

### III

The war with Spain has revived the scheme to annex Hawaii. It has been suggested that our forces should occupy the islands with the consent of their rulers upon the plea of military necessity, the intention being to force Congress to assume jurisdiction in due form over territory practically abandoned to the United States. The suggestion is intolerable. The seizure of Hawaii by a *coup d'état* would be a shameful abuse of executive power. But, the question of method apart, the situation in respect of annexation is really unchanged by the state of war. For five years the ruling class in Hawaii have been trying to break into the Union with the aid of powerful friends on the inside, yet the most persistent efforts have failed to induce the majority of the American people to let down the bars, although a minority are honestly convinced that annexation is desirable. Twice has a treaty of annexation failed in the Senate and the expedient of a joint resolution promised the same result. The project is now resurrected as a "war measure."

The exigencies of war do not demand the reversal of our attitude toward Hawaii. Even if Spain had a Pacific fleet, Congress should not be frightened into accepting the islands. But Spain has no sea power in the Pacific. Her fleet has been destroyed; her chief port in the Philippines is dominated by the United States. Honolulu would be a convenient base of supplies during our control over Manila, but the perpetual obligation of an annexation is not to be assumed in consideration of a temporary convenience.

If the United States shall commit the blunder of annexing the Philippines they must assume the burden of Hawaii. If, however, the Philippines are held out as a lure for Hawaii, the American people should clearly understand the true sequence of these projects and pay no attention to the gnat until they have swallowed the camel.



## IV

Admiral Dewey's achievement at Manila may present the United States with the problem of dealing definitively with territory in the other hemisphere. A proper solution is not suggested by our experience, but it is well within our competency if we shall be inspired by true conceptions of duty and interest.

Sharp practitioners assert that whatever moral obligation may restrain us from appropriating Cuba, we have a free hand in the Philippines because we have made no disclaimer in respect of them. This distinction is immoral. We have made war upon Spain because of the intolerable condition of a neighboring colony, and prefaced our action by a disclaimer of grasping motives. The moral strength of this position will be impaired if we unnecessarily appropriate a remote possession of Spain, the condition of which was never the object of our concern, much less of remonstrance. Yet the United States may be compelled eventually to treat the Philippines as divorced from Spain, without evading any self-imposed restraint. Spain's authority over the islands is vigorously disputed by rebels, and it is jeopardized by our legitimate operations at Manila. In view of these facts and the internal weakness of the metropolitan State, the close of the war may find the Philippines irretrievably lost to Spain. The active duty of the United States, in this event, cannot be forecasted, for the disposition of this great domain will depend upon conditions not yet developed. Possibly the intense rivalry between the European Powers may suggest a government for the islands modeled upon the lines of the Congo State; or they might be transferred to the Dutch, who are independent, yet not aggressively strong, and have demonstrated their ability to administer the Philippines by their long and successful rule in Java.

The passive duty of the United States is clearly foreshadowed. The Philippines ought not to be annexed, because the considerations which discourage the annexation of Cuba, lying at our very door, are absolutely prohibitive in the case of territory six thousand miles over sea, and peopled by millions of barbarians.

Our passive duty in respect of the Philippines and other territory over sea is commended by our established policy—we neither covet possessions beyond America nor permit foreign nations to aggrandize their domains at the expense of American States.

Now in the heat of battle we are urged to dismember our

policy and intrench ourselves abroad. The project should not be dismissed merely because of its novelty. When the American people balk at a momentous enterprise because it is novel, they will have lost their courage; when they rush into one for the sake of change they will have lost their balance. So this project must be considered with minds free from timidity, yet intent to determine its true bearings.

Publicists who approve the departure from the old ways, but are not dazzled by the notion that the United States, after chastising Spain, will at once be able to guard America with one hand and seize territory abroad at will with the other, are captivated by the suggestion of an alliance which would bring to our aid the mighty fleet of Great Britain, open coaling stations around the globe, and enable us to launch a colonial policy under the auspices of the great colonizing Power. This method of gaining an end goes far to discredit the end itself. Alliances, save in cases of emergency, are quite as repugnant to the interests of the United States now as they were when Washington condemned them, and the opportunity to seize land in Asia is not an emergency, but a situation created by our deliberate act.

The alliance would not be without its price. What must we pay Great Britain? It would be a threat to other nations. Why should we menace States with whom we are at peace? The history of alliances is a record of forced companionship, of mutual distrust, of broken pledges. But it will be argued that an Anglo-American alliance would be ennobled and perpetuated by common ideals and interests. This argument is not without attraction; but a review of Anglo-American relations does not inspire a belief in its soundness. The present situation forecasts a better understanding between the United States and Great Britain than can be reached by entering into bonds. We have the open sympathy of Great Britain in our contest with Spain, and when I say that it were ill bestowed elsewhere, I pay the highest compliment to her sagacity and her sense of justice. We may believe that her friendliness is expressed by works as well as by words. Unquestionably Americans and Englishmen should hereafter prefer to dwell upon the common interests of English-speaking people rather than to accentuate their circumstantial differences; and other Powers may be assured that should their combined forces unjustly attack either guardian of these interests, the other will come to the rescue. This emer-

gency has not arisen, and nothing is so likely to prevent it as the fear of a union between the English-speaking peoples. We should be satisfied for the present, I think, with the wholesome impression created by the talk of alliance.

An economic argument for the expansion of the United States is fairly summed up in the following propositions: 1. Our ability to produce so greatly exceeds our capacity to consume that wider markets are necessary. 2. Other nations are overrunning vast fields of present and prospective commercial value in order to monopolize their trade. 3. The United States must, therefore, seize compensating fields, or at least acquire such strongholds as will tend to check the advance of their rivals. The first proposition is incontestable. The second depicts the most striking movement of our time, but this movement does not in its present stage forbode disaster to America, and should not mislead the United States into reversing their policy in accordance with the suggestion of the last proposition.

The economic argument has in view the question of the Far East, and especially the future of China. Now, it is possible that certain districts in China never opened to our trade will remain closed although they have passed into the control of European Powers, but, on the other hand, a large area has been thrown open through British influence. As matters stand we have the advantage of new fields without the loss of old ones, and Great Britain, though not always successful in checking the advance of her rivals, usually holds gained ground. Whether more extended fields in China shall be opened to us is another question, yet in this relation the action of Russia should be estimated at its probable value. The building of the Siberian railroad is the most Anglo-Saxon work that Russia has ever done, and the acquisition of a terminal on the Pacific crowns the enterprise. In moving to an open sea on the line of least resistance, Russia has simply followed the route of a virile people, and the open sea means eventually commerce, and commerce means exchange.

The protectionist dogma of the sufficiency of the home market is weakening before the palpable necessity for wider markets for our manufactures, and the outward impetus given by a foreign war ought to demolish it. Yet we can expand our commerce without abandoning our traditional and well founded policy.

The expedition to the Philippines itself opens a wider market in Asia, and at the close of hostilities we will be in a position to secure further advantages in that direction. But after all, is not our sudden appreciation of Asia exaggerated? Valuable as is the trade of the Far East, great as are its possibilities, do we not magnify its relative importance through a mistaken view of the great struggle for China? The commercial interests involved, however great in themselves, are incidental to the larger political question, the Balance of Power. Every advance made by Russia in China brings her nearer to India. The real "Question of the Far East" is not, Who shall sell the most goods to the Chinese, but, Shall Russia rule Asia?

We need not seek commercial salvation by way of conquest in the Far East. We may gain our share of the world's trade without annexing an acre of land over sea. Our exports to South America, Africa, and to Europe itself can be vastly increased by the enterprise of our merchants encouraged by a revision of tariff laws.

The acquisition of territory in the Far East would involve the United States as surely and perhaps as deeply in European politics as though they touched the fringe of Europe itself, for Asia, and Africa as well, are for the most part appanages of Europe. In full view of the consequences we are urged to intrench ourselves in Asia. We are told that our political isolation, however advantageous during the youth of the Republic, is now the sign of a selfish and timid provincialism.

This is a perverse view of a really admirable position. "Isolation" does not suggest provincialism. It can hardly be said to express a policy. It simply depicts the situation of the United States—a country without powerful and intrusive neighbors, and wishing none.

We shall depreciate the Monroe Doctrine if we assume a concern in the disposition of territory in the Old World which we deny to European States in the New. Indeed, it may be argued that as the doctrine expresses our repugnance to contact with these States, we suggest its obsolescence if we seek contact abroad. Why should we risk the primacy of a hemisphere for a part interest in the Far East?

The abandonment of our normal attitude of impartial and temperate friendliness toward the States of Europe would provoke discord at home. Millions of American citizens are of foreign birth or parentage, and should the Republic become involved in the web of European intrigue and thus be led to favor or oppose



now this Power and now that one, the instinctive sympathy and prejudice of race would assert themselves. The bickerings of Old World factions would disturb our politics and accentuate racial differences which in the interest of American unity should disappear.

Americans are not impelled to conquer by the need of markets or of new lands for an overcrowded people, though these excuses are paraded; nor will the hope of converting heathen to Christianity and republicanism allure them. The sole motive will be the imperial idea—the ungoverned impulse to conquer, and the imperial idea is repugnant to our political creed.

The weapons of imperialism are force and intrigue, and these must be wielded by an executive authority more strongly centralized and more powerful than the American people have deemed to be compatible with their interests. We need not apprehend anything like Russian autocracy or perhaps French military republicanism, but our Administration must be assured of support in any move that will advance the flag. This is substantially the situation in Great Britain, where Her Majesty's Government have *carte blanche* to enlarge the Empire by treaty and, substantially, by occupation, and Parliament is expected to pass such measures as may be necessary to sustain their action.

No advocate of the imperial policy has dared to guess at its cost; but when we remind ourselves that about one half of the federal revenue is now expended on war account, including, of course, pensions, that new war bonds will increase the interest charge by millions, and that other millions must be added for new pensions and an inevitable increase in the military establishment, we prefigure already a war budget vastly exceeding that of either Great Britain, Russia, Germany, or France—the great Military Powers. Add to this the expense of acquiring and maintaining possessions thousands of miles over sea, and of supporting the imperial estate, and the burden of taxation will be far weightier than our people ought to bear in time of peace.

What strength shall be added to our institutions by acquiring territory in the distant land toward which our eyes are turned? There is not a prospective State of the Union in Asia. Nor a

prospective Territory where the people may govern themselves under federal supervision until statehood shall be conferred. Nor even a prospective colony in the best sense of the term—a land peopled by emigrants from a mother country. There is nothing for the United States in Asia but perpetual provinces, and provincial government is nothing but the rule of force applied to subject peoples.

Whether or not the provincial relation is technically lawful under our Constitution, it is plainly opposed to the true spirit of an instrument designed to unite self-governing and indestructible States.

## V

When a nation declares war, it should as a rule exert its powers with sole regard to the avowed purpose, and this self-restraint is especially commended in a war undertaken in the interest of humanity. Yet war may create or disclose situations justifying a successful aggressor in broadening its operations, and in conducting peace negotiations with a view to heavier demands than the original purpose calls for. When the aggressor is so manifestly the superior combatant that its success is only a question of time, it may decide that resistance prolonged in desperation after national honor shall have been creditably defended is a distinct aggravation of the original grievance, to be accounted for in the final settlement. These considerations bear upon the policy of the United States in respect of Spanish territory and of indemnity.

Spain's possessions in Asia are beyond the sphere of our legitimate interest, and the operations against them are justified only as they are calculated to bring her more speedily to terms in Cuba. If then the campaign against the Philippines shall be pressed to the extinction of Spanish sovereignty, the result will be due to the prolongation of hopeless resistance in Cuba. Porto Rico is in different case. This island lies within our sphere of interest, and considerations of justice, no less than policy, may warrant the United States in dealing with it as with Cuba.

As to indemnity, not a life nor a dollar should be spent in placing a mortgage on Spanish territory. Indeed, if Spain shall sue for peace in due season let us pay our own bills and not grind a beaten people.

A victory over Spain will advance the position of the United States in America. A few years ago we called the attention of our most powerful neighbor to the Monroe Doctrine with satisfactory results, and soon we may rid ourselves of our most troublesome one. Thenceforth the United States will enjoy acknowledged supremacy in the Gulf of Mexico and the Caribbean Sea. Outposts in the West Indies will be the visible signs of supremacy; and it may appear that one or more of these may be located in Cuba itself, as well to the advantage of the Cubans as our own.

Let us reject the idea of acquiring territory abroad and a seat in a Concert of Powers, and rely upon the strength of our independent position, the wisdom of our laws, and the courage and enterprise of our people to further our immediate interests in foreign lands—the protection of our citizens, and the expansion of our trade.

Let us welcome the prestige which the war confers upon the Republic. The declaration of war in the interest of humanity, the expeditions to the Philippines, the ability to shoot straight from a rolling platform, mark the advent of a new force in the world. This force may be exerted if need be in any righteous cause, and if need shall arise the United States will see their duty more clearly and perform it the better for being unembarrassed by possessions abroad or by complex relations with the States of the Old World.

MORRISTOWN, NEW JERSEY, June 10, 1898.





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